

March 16, 2022

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to **reinstate and expand guaranteed emergency paid sick days and paid family and medical leave.**

Emergency paid leave is a critical public health investment for mitigating COVID-19 and preventing future waves from causing massive worker disruptions, and a key tool to strengthen women's labor force participation. It is also an immediate intervention for workers on the frontlines who have borne the brunt of the pandemic and need these protections. It has been and remains overwhelmingly popular - last month, a Navigator survey¹ found that 82 percent of those surveyed agreed that all US workers should have access to paid sick time during the coronavirus pandemic.

The ongoing spread of COVID-19, which continues with the Omicron variant, has highlighted the health and economic consequences faced by working people when they lack access to paid leave. In the United States, more than 26 million workers lack access to paid sick days, including nearly 70 percent of the lowest wage workers.² Workers in jobs that require frequent contact with the public, including those in food preparation and service, personal home care, and child care, are among the least likely to have paid sick days and the most likely to be unable to afford to take unpaid time away from work. Furthermore, only 23 percent of the civilian workforce has access to longer-term paid family leave through their employer, and only 40 percent has access to paid medical leave through their employer.³

Emergency paid sick days and paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) helped flatten the curve in the beginning phase of the pandemic - it was estimated to have corresponded to preventing 400 new cases of COVID-19 in states previously without sick leave per day, or more than 15,000 cases per day nationwide.⁴ However, these protections expired at the end of 2020, leaving millions of workers facing financial hardship when new variants arise. An estimated 8.8 million people - disproportionately Black and Latinx - missed work due to COVID-19 illness or caregiving at the height of the Omicron wave. Six in ten of them reported losing household income, and one in five that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.⁵ And in the last week of January and first week of February, 12.8 million people did not work because they had COVID-19, were caring for someone who did, or their child's school or daycare was closed.⁶ It is clear that emergency paid leave is a critically important tool for reducing the spread of this virus, particularly necessary as a response to the Omicron variant and any future variants, and it can also be an invaluable tool in supporting vaccination and testing.

We were heartened to see that in his recent National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, President Biden listed emergency paid sick days as a priority for preventing economic and educational shutdowns and said that he would “work with Congress to provide paid sick leave to workers who need to miss work due to a case of COVID-19 or to care for a loved one who has COVID-19.” As you work with the President on this critical goal, we believe that any emergency paid sick days policy must meet three key criteria:

- **Provide universal, guaranteed access.** Any emergency paid leave policy must require employers to provide this leave to all of their employees, regardless of the employer size or nature of the work. While the emergency paid sick days provision in FFCRA was incredibly effective for those who it covered, it left too many people out by excluding large employers and through various other exemptions. Any emergency paid leave policy should provide the same protections to all workers.
- **Cover the purposes that meet people’s needs.** Emergency paid leave should cover several key purposes to meet people’s needs during the ongoing pandemic:
 - *Leave to care for one’s own health needs* so that individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 can quarantine while waiting for test results, and those who are sick have the time they need to recover.
 - *Leave to care for a family member’s health needs* when they are infected with COVID-19 and need care to recover.
 - *Leave to care for a family member whose school or place of care has closed* so that parents and caregivers can manage their caregiving responsibilities when faced with a sudden facility closure due to COVID-19 exposure.
 - *Safe leave* so that people facing domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking situations, which have increased dramatically over the pandemic, can take the time they need to recover or seek assistance.
 - *Vaccination leave* so that we can continue working toward the President’s goal of every American being able to access an effective vaccine. Vaccination leave should also allow workers the time off to take a family member to get vaccinated, particularly as the youngest children are able to receive a vaccination.
- **Provide sufficient duration and pay:** An emergency paid leave policy should provide a minimum of 10 days of shorter-term leave, provided at full pay, for all of the above purposes. It should also provide 12 weeks of longer-term leave, for longer recoveries or caregiving obligations, provided at a minimum of two-thirds pay.

We urge Congress to swiftly reinstate and expand guaranteed emergency paid sick days and paid family and medical leave. Our society is only as healthy as its most vulnerable members. Now more than ever, we must recognize that we all have a stake in ensuring that working people have access to paid sick and safe days and paid family and medical leave.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

#VOTEPROCHOICE

1,000 Days

A Better Balance

AFL-CIO

African American Ministers In Action

All-Options

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Friends Service Committee

American Geriatrics Society

American Heart Association

Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asset Building Strategies

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

BOLD ReThink

Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy

Caring Across Generations

Center for Advancement of Public Policy

Center for American Progress

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)

Children's Defense Fund

Coalition on Human Needs

COLAGE

COVID Survivors for Change

Economic Policy Institute

Epilepsy Foundation

Equal Rights Advocates

Faith in Public Life

Family Values @ Work

First Focus Campaign for Children

Health Care Voices

Health Care Voter

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Justice for Migrant Women

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund

Main Street Alliance

MANA, A National Latina Organization

March of Dimes

MomsRising
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Council for Occupational Safety & Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living
National Education Association
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Employment Law Project
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Oxfam America
Paid Leave for All
Paid Leave for the U.S. (PL+US)
Poder Latinx
Public Citizen
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
RESULTS
Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sojourners
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Gerontological Society of America
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
True North Research
Union for Reform Judaism
United for Respect
United State of Women
UsAgainstAlzheimer's
We Demand More Coalition
Women of Reform Judaism
Workplace Fairness
YWCA USA

Arizona

William E. Morris Institute for Justice

California

ACCESS Reproductive Justice
California Work & Family Coalition
Legal Aid at Work
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles

Connecticut

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

District of Columbia

The Restaurant Opportunities Center DC (ROC DC)

Florida

Florida Black Women's Roundtable
Women's Foundation of Florida

Hawai'i

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Illinois

Chicago Foundation for Women
JCFS Chicago
Prevent Child Abuse IL
The Children's Center of Cicero Berwyn
Women Employed

Louisiana

Louisiana Progress
The Restaurant Opportunities Center of New Orleans (ROC NOLA)

Maryland

Jewish Social Service Agency of Greater Washington DC
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Public Justice Center

Massachusetts

Coalition for Social Justice

Michigan

Michigan League for Public Policy

Minnesota

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
TakeAction Minnesota

Mississippi

The Restaurant Opportunities Center of Mississippi (ROC MS)

Missouri

Missouri Jobs with Justice

New Jersey

CWA Local 1036
Family Voices NJ
Laundry Workers Center
Melinated Moms
National Association of Social Workers - NJ Chapter
New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
NJ Citizen Action
NJ State Industrial Union Council
Sandkamp Woodworks LLC
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

New Mexico

New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

New York

Citizen Action of New York

North Carolina

Action Institute NC
Equity Before Birth
NC Child
NC Justice Center
NC State AFL-CIO
North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic
Violence
North Carolina Council of Churches

Pennsylvania

Jewish Family and Community Services of
Pittsburgh
Philadelphia Drivers' Union
The Restaurant Opportunities Center of
Pennsylvania (ROC PA)
Women And Girls Foundation of Southwest
PA
Women's Law Project

Rhode Island

Economic Progress institute - RI

Texas

Equal Justice Center

Washington

Economic Opportunity Institute

Wisconsin

Citizen Action of Wisconsin

1 Global Strategy Group, GBAO Research + Strategy & Navigator (2022, February). *February Navigator #1*. Retrieved 15 March 2022, from <https://navigatorresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Navigator-Toplines-02.07.2022.pdf>

2 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2020 (Table 33)*. Retrieved 15 March 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2021/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2021.pdf>

3 Ibid, Tables 17 and 33.

4 Pichler, S., Wen, K. & Ziebarth, N. (2020, October). *COVID-19 Emergency Sick Leave Has Helped Flatten The Curve In The United States*. Retrieved 15 March 2022, from Health Affairs website: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00863>

5 Mason, J. (2022, February). *Lack of Paid Leave Stifles Economic Recovery and Blocks Women's Return to Work*. Retrieved 15 March 2022, from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/lack-of-paid-leave-stifles.pdf>

6 U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *Week 42 Household Pulse Survey: January 26 – February 7, 2022 (Employment Table 3. Educational Attainment for Adults Not Working at Time of Survey, by Main Reason for Not Working and Source Used to Meet Spending Needs)*. Retrieved 15 March 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/hhp/hhp42.html>